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SUBJECT: ELECTORAL BOARD EXPOSES NARCO-CANDIDATES

Sensitive But Unclassified, Please Handle Accordingly.

11. (U) Summary: The National Electoral Board (JNE) on November 14 identified more than 200 candidates in local elections who had lied on their resumes, including some who had hidden ties to narcotrafficking. Most of the publicized narco-candidates did not win. Despite evidence of narco-influence, the JNE President said the number of narco-candidates was not/not rising, but rather increased official scrutiny of candidate lists had led to more discoveries. Former Interior Minister Rospigliosi disagreed, and claimed the presence of narcos in public office was becoming more widespread. Whatever the case, political parties must step up to the challenge of policing candidate lists and culling candidates with questionable pasts. End Summary.

12. (U) The National Electoral Board on November 14 (five days before regional and municipal elections) found that 214 candidates had lied on their resumes (which the JNE requires of all candidates), including 156 who had failed to mention past criminal charges. Many candidates hid links to narcotrafficking. The JNE passed this information to the Prosecutors Office for further investigation. Some high profile media reports about the discovery followed.

13. (U) In some cases, the deceptions and links to narcotrafficking were serious. For example, Humberto Chavez Penaherrera, an APRA mayoral candidate in a San Martin (Hualлага Valley) district, had a criminal record and is the brother of a convicted narcotrafficker. (Note: Chavez Penaherrera and another APRA candidate linked to narcotrafficking were subjects of front page stories leading to accusations that APRA Secretary General Mauricio Mulder had not properly vetted APRA candidate lists. End Note.) Pucallpa Mayor Luis Valdez Villacorta, an independent, was re-elected despite being linked to local narcotraffickers and the murder of a local journalist. Luis Sante Zubia Cortez, of Si Cumple in Moquegua, was removed from the party list before the elections and detained by authorities after the JNE announced he was wanted for embezzlement.

14. (SBU) JNE President Enrique Mendoza told Poloffs that the influence of narcotraffickers was not necessarily worse than past years, but that increased and more systematic scrutiny of candidate lists had led to discoveries that may not have been made in previous years. He noted that during the recent regional/municipal elections, the JNE, for the first time, had reviewed resumes and looked for inconsistencies. Mendoza

said Peru needed a massive voter education campaign to increase citizen awareness about the election process and to prevent narco-penetration of the political system in the future.

15. (SBU) Former Interior Minister and counternarcotics expert Fernando Rospigliosi told Poloffs that "many more (narcotrafficker sympathizers) were elected than you think." He highlighted a number of pro-coca radical candidates in Huanuco, San Martin, and the VRAE who are not explicitly narcotraffickers but allegedly received their financial support. Unlike Mendoza, Rospigliosi said the narcotraffickers' influence in the elections had increased, primarily because candidates needed cash and narcotraffickers had large amounts of that on hand. He further observed that the election of pro-coca candidates was proof of narcotrafficking influence.

16. (SBU) Comment: JNE oversight revealed the shady backgrounds of many candidates in November's municipal elections, but the information emerged only days before the voting. Peruvian political parties (even one as well organized as APRA) are vulnerable to candidates with easy access to large amounts of cash. The JNE deserves credit for exposing an ongoing problem, but the parties will need to develop stricter internal controls to eliminate influence of illicit money and questionable candidates. It is unclear whether parties, whose credibility is low and whose oversight capabilities are minimal, will be up to the task. End Comment.
POWERS